

By James Collins

Kollsman Instrument had obtained a contract for both the Navy and the Air Force to manufacture 1800 military flight line test sets known as the TTU- 205. I was the program manager for the operation and dealt with both of the services. The military have large formal processes for creating the logistics necessary to support a new piece of equipment that is entering into their inventory. There were many preliminary meetings between our company and the various support organizations to understand what their requirements were and what we would have to do to make their job easier. We wanted to keep them on our side because they were influential in adding to the contract over the years and were our key customers.

In the early 1980s, we had a meeting down at Tinker Air Force Base (AFB) with a colonel and a number of the program managers supporting the Air Force at that location. The formal meeting was in a very large amphitheater even though we had only planned to have eight formal members in attendance. They told us that the conference rooms were all booked and this venue was available for our use even though it was many times larger than anything we needed. The Air Force supplied a projector so we could display or slides during the presentation. We had the lights turned down which obtained a good contrast ratio and we started into the presentation. After about 45 minutes we decided that this was a good time to have a coffee break so we paused the presentation and asked to have the lights turned on.

As I glanced around the amphitheater, I noticed that there were more than 40 people up in the back rows and some of them appeared to be sleeping. Those rows were fully 25 rows up from our presentation and I had no idea whom these people might be. I asked Tom White the Air Force program manager who was the coordinator of our meeting,

“Tom’ there are a lot of people up in the back who must have come in while the lights were out. Why don’t you invite them to come down here to the seats closer so they can better hear the presentation?”

“Jim’ these people have nothing to do with our program. They are civilian Air Force personnel who work on various programs and at the time probably have nothing much to do. They tend to wander about various conference buildings to find a place where a presentation is going on and they come in, sit in the back and go to sleep.”

“Does anybody object? It seems like an awful waste of manpower and time.”

“Jim this is part of the government and down here in the South we are a lot more lenient than you guys up north. After all, this is a government job, we do not have time cards and we do not have work order numbers. When they hire somebody into an organization, it is up to the organization to make use of them as an asset. Nobody objects that they are going into a conference room and going to sleep as long as they keep a low profile and do not attract any attention to our way of operation. Not only will I not invite them to come down and sit closer, if I asked them they would pack up and leave and go find somewhere else to sleep. Is far better to just ignore them and let them enjoy their government job.

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